

**READINGS ON THE DEFINITION AND
ARGUMENTS TOWARDS ATHEISM AMONG
MUSLIM THEOLOGIANS AND
PHILOSOPHERS**

***Mohamad Razif Mohamad Fuad^{*#}, Mohd Fauzi
Hamat^{*}, Mohd Khairul Naim Che Nordin^{*},
Mohammad Abdelhamid Salem Qatawneh^{*}***

^{*}Department of Aqidah and Islamic Thought. Academy
of Islamic Studies. Universiti Malaya. 50603. Kuala
Lumpur. Malaysia.

Email: [#]raziffuad@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study aims to discuss a preliminary analysis of responses by classical and contemporary Muslim scholars on Atheism and New Atheism and identify the approaches that have been taken by them. It also elucidates on type of arguments used by those scholars. While there are many studies about Atheism, New Atheism, and Islam, few or none of them preliminary analysed the works of classical and contemporary Muslim scholars. Selected books written by classical and contemporary Muslim scholars on Atheism and New Atheism were preliminarily reviewed and examined. This study found that the critiques of classical and contemporary Muslim scholars are constructive, systemic, and systematic in upholding the *'aqidah*. Five renowned and essential rational arguments that are frequently used by classical and contemporary Muslim scholars are the ontological argument, argument from contingency, *kalām* cosmological argument, teleological argument, and moral argument. The researcher also believes that these respective arguments must also undergo reform (*islāh*), renewal (*tajdīd*), and constant improvement in

areas or matters that are subject to change over time (*mutaghayyirāt*).

Keywords: Islam and New Atheism; Atheism; ontological argument; argument from contingency; *kalām* cosmological argument.

Khulasah

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk membincangkan analisis awal maklum balas para sarjana Muslim klasik dan kontemporari berkenaan Ateis dan Ateisme Baharu dan mengesan pendekatan yang digunakan mereka. Kajian ini juga menjelaskan tentang jenis-jenis penghujahan yang digunakan oleh para sarjana tersebut. Walaupun terdapat banyak kajian berkenaan Ateisme, Ateisme Baharu dan Islām, sedikit atau tiada analisis awal dilakukan terhad karya-karya para sarjana Muslim klasik dan kontemporari. Beberapa buah buku terpilih, tulisan para sarjana Muslim klasik dan kontemporari berkenaan Ateis dan Ateisme Baharu telah dikaji dan dinilai. Kajian ini mendapati, kritikan para sarjana Muslim klasik dan kontemporari adalah konstruktif, sistemik dan sistematik dalam mengangkat akidah. Lima bentuk penghujahan yang dikenali tersebut adalah hujah ontologi, hujah kemungkinan, hujah kalam kosmologi, hujah teleologi, dan hujah moral. Pengkaji juga meyakini bahawa hujah-hujah ini perlu melalui proses perubahan ke arah kebaikan (*islāh*), pembaharuan (*tajdīd*), dan penambahbaikan yang malar dalam ruang atau perkara yang boleh berubah mengikut kesesuaian masa (*mutaghayyirāt*).

Kata kunci: Islam dan Ateisme Baharu; Ateisme; dalil ontologi; dalil kemungkinan; dalil kosmologi kalām.

Introduction

The emergence of New Atheism brought about a global cultural shift that has drawn religion back into

the centre of public discourse. The proponents of this contemporary movement have launched an ideological onslaught against all religions alike, denouncing them as nonsensical and deeply harmful. They have published and sold millions of copies of their writings and have increasingly been given public platforms for their speeches and debates. New Atheists have accrued a vast amount of social and political capital, and, all the while, New Atheism has gained popularity as a worldview, coming to compete aggressively with theisms all around the world.

In this particular short survey, we would try to expose the previous account of works especially regarding responses to Atheism and New Atheism which were written by the classical and contemporary Muslim scholars. Thus, a corpus of writings in Arabic and English for are included in this category of relevant literature to the present study.

Definition of Atheism

The precise definition of atheism is a contentious issue as academics have not reached a consensus on its definition.¹ Atheism linguistically means 'not a theist' or in other words, not a believer in the existence of a God or gods. The prefix *a* means none or not, and theism, coming from the word *theos*, denotes a "belief in the existence of an intervening God or gods". Both come from Greek but relying on the literal meaning is not enough to explain the implications of the term. Thus, what does disbelief in a God or gods imply? Does it indicate that the one who describes himself as an atheist has positive arguments in favour of atheism? Does it mean that they are currently not convinced by

¹ For an elaboration of the debate, see Stephen Bullivant, *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11-21.

any theistic arguments? Or does it mean that they just do not believe in any gods?

'Atheism' in most dictionaries defined as belief that there is no God. Yet this is not what the term means if one considers it from the point of view of its Greek etymology. In Greek "a (α)" means "without" or "not," and "theos ($\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$)" means "god."² From this standpoint, an atheist is someone without a belief in God; he or she need not be someone who believes that God does not exist.³

Eller had come to a unique conclusion that, "At its core, atheism...designates a position (not a "belief") that includes or asserts no god(s)"⁴ It is known that a difference between position and belief is that position is a stand, opinion, or stance while belief is mental acceptance of a claim as likely true. Martin emphasized with a definition that likely taken from Greek word, *atheos*. According to him, "[A]n atheist is someone without a belief in God; he or she need not be someone who believes that God does not exist."⁵ While

² Gordon Stein, "The Meaning of Atheism and Agnosticism," in *An Anthology of Atheism and Rationalism*, ed. Gordon Stein (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus, 1980), 3.

³ This negative sense of "atheism" should be distinguished from the sense of "atheism" introduced by Paul Edwards. According to Edwards, an atheist is a person who rejects a belief in God. This rejection may be because the person believes that the statement "God exists" is false, but it may be for other reasons. The negative sense of "atheism" used here is broader than Edwards's definition since on the present definition someone can be an atheist if he or she has no belief in God, although the lack of belief is not the result of rejection. See Paul Edwards, "Atheism," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1967), 1:175.

⁴ J. D. Eller, "What is Atheism?," in *Atheism and Secularity*. ed. P. Zuckerman (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 1:1.

⁵ M. Martin, "General Introduction", in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, ed. M. Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1-7.

McGrath believes it is a principled and informed decision to reject belief in God.⁶

These varieties of definitions concluded what has been emphasized by Stephen Bullivant. Some of the ambiguity involved in defining atheism arises from difficulty in reaching a consensus for the definitions of words like deity and God. The variety of different conceptions of God, deities and even spiritual, supernatural, or transcendental concepts, such as those of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Taoism leads to dissimilar ideas regarding atheism's applicability.

Atheism in Arabic word is *al-ilhād*. The word is taken from past tense (*fi'l al-māḍī*) *lahada* or *alhada*. According to Ibn Fāris, the alphabet *lam*, *hā'* and *dal* (L-H-D) refer to disgress from the straight path (*mayl 'an istiḳāmah*). It is said: The man has disgressed from the straight path (*alhada al-rajul*) if he deviates from the path of truth and faith.⁷ *Al-lahd* is a trench (*al-shaqq*) on the side of a grave at the ground; because it inclines from the middle to the side.⁸ While *ilhād* technically means inclination and renunciation from the straight path, religion, or truth as Ibn Taymiyyah said, "*Al-Ilhād* implies a deviation from something to something in void."⁹

Ilhād in the classical Islamic worldview is in the broadest sense of an absence or lack of belief in the six fundamental beliefs (*al-arkān al-sittah*). Besides, those who believed in the eternity of the cosmos, no resurrection of the dead, materialists, and naturalists,

⁶ A. McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World* (London: Rider, 2004), 175.

⁷ Abī al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad Zakariyyā, *Mu'jam Maqāyis al-Lughah* (Cairo: Dār Ḥayā', 1949)5/236.

⁸ Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Cairo: Dār Ṣādir, 1955), 3:388 – 389.

⁹ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (Medina: Majma' al-Mālik Fahd, 1995), 12:124.

technically also may be considered *mulhīd*. The right predecessors (*salaf al-sāliḥ*) interpreted *ilhād* in verses below as polytheism (*shirk*), murder (*al-qatl*), wrongdoings (*al-ma'āsī*) and intentionally making unlawful things lawful.¹⁰ Some of them also use it to portray the innovations and deprivation in *'aqīdah*, done in Mecca. Commonly, if they called people and sects *al-malāḥidah*, they meant those people fell into serious deviations. As an example, in the debate between al-Kinānī and Bishr al-Marīsī, al-Kinānī said:

When Allah the Almighty revealed these four verses, He specifically refers it to the Arabs, with their understanding and knowledge of their meanings and expressions, their specifics and generalities, and the original ruling from Him with it. Then, He did not leave it to His creation with confusion so those who inclined from the path to deviate in His Attributes and to attack His revelations...¹¹

Al-Zajjāj defines *ilhād* as scepticism in Allah (*al-shakk fi Allāh*).¹² Al-Bayhaqī explains the Ḥadīth of 77 branches of faith by saying,

This is because a group of people is astray from knowing Allah and they become infidel, and atheists and they claimed that He is not the Doer of this universe. He is not what He is, not even exists except only *sensibilia*. There is nothing behind it, and

¹⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fi Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān* (Makkah: Dār al-Tarbiyyah, n.d.), 18: 600-603.

¹¹ 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Kinānī, *al-Haydah wa al-I'tidhār fi al-Radd 'alā man Qāla bi Khalq al-Qur'ān* (Medina: Maktabah al-'Ulūm wa al-Ḥikam, 2002), 56.

¹² Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs* (Ghazzah: al-Maktabah al-Markaziyyah, 1965), 9: 135.

that beings and accidents only take place and occur by the natures that are in the elements of water, fire, air, and earth. There is no administrator of the universe. It happens without His wills and creation.¹³

The origin of the word *ilḥad* was taken from the Qur'ān:

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

Translation: "The most beautiful names belong to Allah: so call on him by them; but shun such men as use profanity in His names: for what they do, they will soon be requited."

Al-A'raf: 7:180

Profanity in His Names (*yulḥidūna fī asmā'ih*) refer to those who deny some of the Names or any of the Attributes denoted by them, design names to Allah with which He did not Name Himself like Father, Son or Holy Spirit, believe that the Names denote attributes similar to those of His creation and derive from the Names of Allah, names for idols such as al-Lāta is from Allah, al-'Uzzā is from al-'Azīz and Manāt is from al-Mannān.¹⁴ Other usage can be found in Sūrah Fuṣṣilāt: 40, Sūrah al-Naḥl: 103, Sūrah al-Ḥajj: 25, Sūrah al-Kahf: 27 and Sūrah al-Jinn: 22.

¹³ Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Rushd and Bombay: Maktabat Dār al-Salafiyyah, 2003), 1: 177.

¹⁴ Refer to al- Abū Maṣūrah al-Māturidī, *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2005), 5: 99; Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Riyadh: Dār Ṭaybah, 1997), 3: 307; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1999), 15: 416-417.

According to Qur'anic usage of the term, *ilhād* means to be inclined to something negative or blasphemy, to deviate from something good, or to tend to something negative or blasphemy and such basic meaning occurs in various Qur'anic contexts, as shown above. *Ilhād* in the Qur'anic terminology does not solely indicate atheism in the sense of denying Allah, as the common meaning of the term in contemporary Arabic denotes; rather, we find that in the Qur'anic contexts, it covers, along with its derivatives and forms, the meanings explained in detail in this study.

Thus, it is a must to distinguish between the modern understanding of atheism, atheism in the worldview of the Qur'an as well as the Right Predecessors, and disbelief based on the way in which the latter is perceived and understood within '*aqīdah*'¹⁵. Disbelief denotes the personal denial or rejection of any of the six fundamental beliefs (*al-arkān al-sittah*) that are belief in God and His oneness, in angels, in the holy Books, in Prophets, in the Day of Judgement, and in Predestination.¹⁶ The rejection of any or all of these

¹⁵ '*Aqīdah*' is more suitable to be used in this research rather than "creed" or "Islamic creed" because, etymologically, creed refers to "a formal statement of Christian beliefs, especially the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed." <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/creed>, viewed on 31 August 2018.

In Islām, there is no article of belief as Christianity that has been known to be gazetted by the Council of the Christian Church. Articles of belief in Islām refers to those matters related to '*aqīdah*', which have been recorded in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and are believed with certainty and conviction in one's heart and soul. For instance, the testimony of faith (*shahādah*) is based on the revelation (*wahy*) sent down by Allah to the Prophet without any intervention by human beings. This is the foundation of the principles of '*aqīdah*' in which Allah has commanded us to believe in, as stated in the Qur'ān.

¹⁶ It is stated in the Ḥadīth narrated by 'Umar when Jibrīl asks Prophet Muḥammad on faith (*īmān*), "Inform me about *īmān*

would bring one outside the fold of Islam. This is referred to as *kufṛ* in Arabic, whereas atheism in a broader sense is known as *ilhād* and is a subcategory of *kufṛ*. Thus, all atheists are considered disbelievers, but not all disbelievers are atheists.

Definition of New Atheism

The pejorative term 'New Atheism'¹⁷ emerged between late summer and autumn (August) of 2006 when the three individual authors Dawkins, Dennett, and Harris (Hitchens came later) were grouped together.¹⁸ An American journalist Gary Wolf wrote the article *The Church of the Non-Believers* to describe the positions promoted by some atheists of the 21st century.¹⁹ His article has succeeded in setting the negative tone of the discussion surrounding what is

(faith)." He (the Messenger of Allah) answered, "It is that you believe in Allāh and His angels and His Books and His Messengers and in the Last Day, and in fate (*qadar*), both in its good and in its evil aspects."

¹⁷ New Atheism according to Wolf is an aggressive, evangelizing atheist movement that conflates moderate forms of religion with fundamentalist forms, and is, in essence, a quasi-religious movement. Refer to Gary Wolf, "The Church of the Non-Believers", Wired, retrieved on 10 October 2020, <https://www.wired.com/2006/11/atheism/>.

Some critics of the movement such as al-'Ujayrī, Waal and Lyons characterize it as 'militant atheism'. Refer to al-'Ujayrī, 'Abd Allāh bin Ṣāliḥ. *Mīlīshiyā al-Ilhād* (London: Takween Center, 2014); Frans De Waal, "Has Militant Atheism become a Religion?", Salon, retrieved on 11 October 2020, https://www.salon.com/2013/03/25/militant_atheism_has_become_a_religion/; Eric Lyons, Kyle Butt, "Militant Atheism," Apologetics Press, retrieved on 11 October 2020, <http://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=12&article=2051>.

¹⁸ Thomas Zenk, "New Atheism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, 251.

¹⁹ Gary Wolf, "The Church of the Non-Believers", Wired, retrieved on 10 October 2020, <https://www.wired.com/2006/11/atheism/>

now popularly called 'New Atheism'. There are five common features discursively ascribed to New Atheism; newness, aggressive criticism towards religion, promoting scientism and rationalism, promoting secularism and comprehensive media coverage.

In trying to understand the New Atheism, one may question whether this movement brings anything new to the contemporary school of thought. What, then, differentiates them from the atheist thinkers from the past?²⁰ The only answer is the object of their vilification that seems to have pinpointed on Islam as emphasized by Stephen LeDrew:

For New Atheism, Islam represents both types of threats [premodern and postmodern]. As a religion founded on faith, it is a 'premodern' threat to scientific modernity, and it illustrates the progressive evolution of human societies, with Islamic societies representing barbarism and the West representing civilization. But it also represents the 'postmodern' threat in that the New Atheists believe that epistemic relativism and cultural pluralism have paradoxically rendered the West incapable of effectively dealing with the threat posed by radical Islam... Islam, indeed, is the most important element in the New Atheists' construction of an ideal of Western civilization.²¹

²⁰ In the past, atheistic criticisms of religion and God in the West had generally been directed at the Judeo-Christian traditions.

²¹ Stephen LeDrew, *The Evolution of Atheism: The Politics of a Modern Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press: 2016), 74–75.

New Atheism clearly is not something new. The only new thing about them is their tone, their emphasis, and extensive media coverage. The New Atheists are much louder and ear-splitting than the classical atheists. While there are many similarities that clearly position New Atheism within the history of scientism, we find that the form of scientism the New Atheists employ owes at least as much to the current state of religious field as to their scientific predecessors.²² While the intrinsic qualities of New Atheism are its grounding in science, reason, rationalism, as well as its unapologetic stance against the excessive of problems associated with living in a predominantly religious world. Classical atheism, on the other hand, is seen as a philosophical brand of atheism that perhaps knows its place, a place prescribed for it in the pre-secular world.²³

In a nutshell, it appears that New Atheism, along with its counterpart Classical Atheism, exists only in general discourse. Subsequently, these two categories contain limited analytical value. The primary conceptual weakness with New Atheism as an analytical category, lies in the pre-existence of the characteristics commonly ascribed to it; qualities which can all be found in the works of both atheists and deists prior to the 21st century. Thus, there is only a little about the newness of New Atheism. Furthermore, polemics of the New Atheists seems to relate more to issues of "probability" as compared to the philosophical issues raised by Classical Atheists.

²² Tom Kaden, and Thomas Schmidt-Lux, "Scientism and Atheism Then and Now: The Role of Science in the Monist and New Atheist Writings," *Culture and Religion* 17(1) (2016), 73-91.

²³ Massimo Pigliucci, "New Atheism and the Scientific Turn in the Atheism Movement", *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 37(1) (2013), 144.

Responses of Muslim Scholars on Atheism and New Atheism

A considerable number of literatures have been published on Atheism and New Atheism. Most of the literatures on both groups are briefly discussed on their frameworks and ideas by classical and contemporary Muslim scholars of all time. The researcher divides these reviews to two categories; classical and modern scholars.

The categorisation of modern and classical scholars is made by referring to the periodisation²⁴ of Islamic history that has been widely used by historian such as Gustave E. von Grunebaum²⁵ and Marshall G.S. Hodgson²⁶. Periodisation frequently assists researchers in studying the past by compartmentalising the past into more readily manageable pieces, which can help researchers better comprehend cause and effect linkages. The classical period of Islam starts in the 7th centuries with the birth of Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) until 10th centuries while the modern period of Islam can be referred to 18th to 20th centuries.²⁷

²⁴ Periodisation is the act of breaking down the past into defined, quantifiable time blocks to make history easier to study and analyse. As a result, descriptive abstractions emerge, which serve as useful labels for spans of time with relatively consistent properties.

²⁵ Von Grunebaum, Gustave E., *Classical Islam: A History, 600 A.D. to 1258 A.D.* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2009).

²⁶ Islamic civilization is divided to six phases, corresponding to the six books in *The Venture of Islam*; the period of Genesis, the High Caliphate, the International Civilization, the Age of Mongol Prestige, the era of the Gunpowder Civilization and Modern Times.

²⁷ The researcher also aware that the periodisation of the world and periods of philosophy and intellectual history were invented by Europeans in Europe to classify the different phases of European history which resonates the inherent problem of periodisation with regards to historiography, history, and epistemology. Islām

a. Atheism in Classical Islam

In the earliest history of Islam, atheism is put under the umbrella term *zandaqah*. *Zindiq* is a medieval Islamic term applied by Muslim scholars to those who are considered to hold views or follow practices that are contrary to Islamic faith.²⁸ According to Ibn Taymiyyah, *zindiq* is an Arabicized Persian word (*mu'arrabah*) after the emergence of Islām and the Arabs. Al-Tha'lab said, "*zindiq* and *farīzīn* are not coming from Arabic words...and not in the Arabs' speech. The Arab says, '*rajulun zandaqun wa zandaqiyy* if he is too parsimonious.'"²⁹ However, historian differs entirely about its origin.³⁰ By the time of the 8th century Abbasid Caliphate however, the meaning of the word *zindīq* and the adjectival *zandaqah* had broadened and could loosely denote the Gnostic Dualists, followers of Manichaeism, agnostics, and atheists. Irāqī argues:

Although the word *zindiq* was initially, in the Sassanid Empire, applied to the Nanichees as a pejorative epithet, by the

does not recognise the image of European and Western experience in periodisation of history. Al-Attas arguing that there are no distinct ages in Islām. Refer to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, "Islamic Philosophy: An Introduction," *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 1(1) (2005), 11-43.

²⁸ Bernard Lewis, *Islam in History: Ideas, People and Events in the Middle East* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993), 287.

²⁹ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*. 10: 147.

³⁰ For an elaboration of the debate, refer to Ahmad Taheri – Iraqī, "Zandaqa in the Early Abbasid Period with Special Reference to Poetry (Doctor of Philosophy thesis, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, 1982), 21-63; Mawhūb bin Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Jawālīqī, *al-Mu'arrab min Kalām al-A'jamī 'alā Hurūf al-Mu'jam* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1990), 342; Ibn Kamāl Bāshā, *Risālah fī Tahqīq Ta'rīb al-Kalimah al-A'jamiyyah* (Limassol: Al-Jaffān al-Jābī, 1991), 71; 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Min Tārīkh al-Ilhād fī al-Islām* (Cairo: Sīnā, 1993).

time of the Islamic epoch its usage had broadened and it was loosely applied to Gnostic dualists, agnostics, atheists and even free-thinkers and libertines. Eventually in the later period, even up to the present time, *zindīq* came to be synonymous with "irreligious".³¹

Writings on atheism in classical Islamic world are dispersed in books of *kalām* because of the loose definition of atheism on that time. It could be defined as deviator, apostate, heretic, or atheist. By categorizing *ilhād* under *zandaqah*, Islamic history is scattered with figures like the early *zindīq* such as Abū 'Alī Sa'īd, Abū 'Alī Rajā' and Yazdānabakht, as well as the theologian *zindīq* such as Ibn Ṭālūt, Nu'mān, Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq and Abū Shākir, the teachers of Ibn al-Rawandī, one of the notable atheists in Islamic history who questioned prophethood, rejected the Abrahamic religions, and sharply criticized the Qur'an and the Ḥadīth. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī divided the *zindīq* to three main groups: the Manichaeism, the theologian, and the poets.³² In the Umayyad age, the terms *mulḥid* and *ilhād* were used to denote desertion of the community of the faithful and rebellion against the legitimate caliphs.³³

³¹ Ahmad Taheri, "Zandaqa in the Early Abbasid Period", 3.

³² Badawī, *Min Tārīkh al-Ilhād fī al-Islām*, 35.

³³ 'Abd Allāh bin al-Zubayr (73AH / 692AD) has been branded by Umayyad propaganda as "the *mulḥid* of the Sacred Mosque" and his supporters are collectively called *mulḥidūn*. In the late Umayyad age the poet Ru'bah described al-Ḍaḥḥāk bin Kays al-Shaybānī, a Khārījites leader as being followed by every *mulḥid*. Meanwhile, the Khārījites considered the Umayyad authorities as "deviators from the right path" Refer to Repp. R. C. "Mulḥid," in *The Eyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. C. E. Bosworth, et.al., (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), 7: 546.

Abū Ḥanīfah (150AH / 767AD) once engage a discussion with the eternists (*dahriyyūn*)³⁴. It has been reported³⁵ that the scholar successfully used a variant of the argument from design. He asks the eternists (*dahriyyah*), to think of a boat in the Euphrates which goes to shore, loads itself with food and other things, then returns, anchors and unloads all by itself without anyone sailing or controlling it. They said: "That is impossible; it could never happen." Thereupon Abū Ḥanīfah said to them, "If it is impossible with respect to a ship, how is it possible for this whole world, with all its vastness, to move by itself?"³⁶

Refutations of the atheists were actively written in the 2nd AH/ 8th AD and 3rd AH / 9th AD by Mu'tazilite theologians like Ḍīrār bin 'Amr, (circa 184 AH / 800 AD) Abū al-Hudhayl al-'Allāf (d. 227 AH / 841 AD), al-Nazzām (d. 232 AH / 846 AD), al-'Aṣamm (d. 225 AH / 839 AD), al-Murdār (226 AH / 840-1 AD), Bisr b. al-Mu'tamir (d. 210 AH / 825 AD), by the Murjiites al-Ḥusayn al-Najjār (d. 220 AH / 835 AD), and by the Ibādī al-Ḥaytham bin al-Ḥaytham. Al-Qāsim bin Ibrāhīm al-Rassī (d. 246 AH / 860 AD), a Zaydī imām

³⁴ It is important to note that atheism in Islamic worldview, atheism is also known as *dahriyyah*. They were so called because of a reference to them in the Qur'ān, in which they are repudiated for saying,

وَقَالُوا مَا هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا الدَّهْرُ وَمَا لَهُم بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ
إِنَّهُمْ إِلَّا يَخْتَوُونَ ٢٤

Translation: "And they say: "What is there but our life in this world? We shall die and we live, and nothing but time can destroy us." But of that they have no knowledge: they merely conjecture." Sūrah al-Jāthiyah: 24

³⁵ Ibn Abī al-'Izz al-Ḥanafī begins the report with *ṣiġhah al-tamrīd*. According to *uṣūl al-ḥadīth*, when a report is reported with *ṣiġhah al-tamrīd*, then it is a weak report.

³⁶ Ibn Abī al-'Izz al-Ḥanafī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Taḥāwīyyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2000), 84-85.

clearly portrays the anonymous *mulhid* as a religious sceptic inclining to atheism.³⁷

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 324AH / 935AD) is to be regarded as one of the most significant theologians (*mutakallimūn*) in the history of Islamic thought. The theological doctrine of the Ash‘arites³⁸, who are the adherents of al-Ash‘arī, is commonly regarded as the most important single school of *kalām* in Islam. This school is commonly referred to in

³⁷ Repp, R. C. "Mulhid", 7: 546.

³⁸ Al-Ash‘ariyyah or the Ash‘arite is a philosophico-religious school of thought in Islām that was established during the 4th and 5th AH / 10th and 11th AD in reaction to the emergence of nonconformist discord groups in previous centuries, particularly the Mu‘tazilah. The Mu‘tazilah is also known as the Proponents of Justice and *Tawhīd* (*Aṣḥāb al-‘Adl wa al-Tawhīd*). This movement, which literally means "those who withdraw themselves", was founded in Baṣrah in the first half of the second/eighth century by Wāṣil bin ‘Atā’ (d. 131 AH / 748 AD), subsequently becoming one of the most prominent theological schools in Islām. It is said that when al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110 AH / 728 AD) was questioned about the position of a Muslim who has committed a grave sin, his student, Wāṣil bin ‘Atā’, replied that such a person was neither a believer nor an unbeliever but occupied an intermediate position (*al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*). Al-Ḥasan was displeased and remarked, "He has withdrawn from us (*i‘tazila ‘annā*)". In the following century, it became, for a period of some 30 years, the official doctrine of the caliphate in Baghdād. Members of the movement adhered to five principles, which were clearly enunciated for the first time by Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf (d. 235AH / 850AD). These were the unity of Allāh (*tawhīd*), divine justice (*‘adl*), the promise (*wa‘d*) and the threat (*wa‘d*), the intermediate position (*al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*) and the commanding of good and forbidding of evil (*al-amr bi al-ma‘rūf wa al-nahy ‘an al-munkar*). Refer to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn* (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-‘Aṣriyyah, 2005), 1: 131–164; Abū al-Muẓaffar al-Asfarāyīnī, *al-Tabṣīr fī al-Dīn* (Beirut: ‘Ālim al-Kutub, 1983), 67-69; al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn, *I‘tiqādāt Firaq al-Muslimīn wa al-Mushrikīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 38-45.

Arabic as al-Ash'ariyyah and its members often referred to as *al-Ashā'irah*.³⁹ Al-Ash'ārī discusses in his treatise *Maqālāt al-Mulhidīn* cosmological theories of the ancients. He defined the term *mulhidah* as comprising the deniers of God's Attributes (*mu'aṭṭilah*) *zanādiqah*, dualists (*thanawiyyah*), Brahmanism, and others who repudiate the Creator and deny prophethood.⁴⁰

The proof of God's existence is also well stated in *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Radd 'alā Ahl al-Zaygh wa al-Bida'* and *Risālah al-Istihsān*. *Kitāb al-Luma'* opens with a hypothetical questioner ask, "What is the proof that creation has a creator who created it and an arranger who arranged it?"⁴¹ Whether it is the affirmation of God's oneness and uniqueness (*tawhīd*), the defence of the doctrine of resurrection, or finally God's otherness from creation, al-Ash'ārī stresses that it is but the verses of the Qur'ān which form the basis of the rational arguments employed by theologians.⁴² According to Ibn 'Asākir, al-Ash'ārī had written a book entitled *al-Fuṣūl*. In the book, al-Ash'ārī criticizes the atheists and the eternists on their unassociation with any religions and their stance on the eternity of the universe.⁴³

Al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 414AH / 1024AD) criticizes a group of layman atheist (*'awwām al-*

³⁹ Refer to the footnote in Aḥmad Maḥmūd Ṣubḥī, *Fī 'Ilm al-Kalām: Dirāsāt Falsafiyah li 'Arā' al-Firaq al-Islāmiyyah fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Naḥḍah al-'Arabiyyah, 1985), 2: 7.

⁴⁰ Repp, R. C. "Mulhid", 7: 546.

⁴¹ Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'ārī, *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Radd 'alā Ahl al-Zaygh wa al-Bida'* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Miṣr, 1955), 17.

⁴² Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'ārī, *Risālah Istihsān al-Khawḍ fī 'Ilm al-Kalām* (n.p.: Dār al-Mashārī li al-Ṭabā'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1995), 38.

⁴³ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tabyīn Kadhīb al-Muftarī fī mā Nusiba ilā al-Ash'ārī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1984), 129.

mulḥidah) who raise the chicken or the egg causality dilemma and call upon the eternity of the cosmos.⁴⁴ Al-Zamakhshārī defines *mulḥid* as those whom their school of thought is unassociated with any religions and any divine laws.⁴⁵ The *dahriyyah* also appeared in the works of Ibn Ḥazm (457 AH / 1064 AD). He categorizes them as "those who profess the endless time" (*al-qā'ilūn bi al-dahr*). These may be summed up as follows:

- i. They believe nothing was newly produced unless it arose from a thing or in a thing.
- ii. What produces bodies is, incontestably, substances and accidents - that is to say - everything that exists in the world.
- iii. If there exists creator of bodies, it is either totally like them or totally different, or similar in certain respects and different in others. Now a total difference is inconceivable, since nothing can produce something contrary or opposite to itself, thus fire does not produce cold.
- iv. If the world had a Doer, He would act with a view to obtaining some benefit, of redressing some wrong, which is to act like the beings of this world, or else by nature, which would render His act eternal.
- v. If bodies were created, it would be necessary that their Creator, before producing them, should act to negate them, negation which itself would be either a body or an accident, which implies that bodies and accidents are eternal.

⁴⁴ Al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Khamsah* (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1996), 117.

⁴⁵ Abū al-Qāsim al-Zamakhshārī, *al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1987), 2: 635.

After refuting these arguments in turn, Ibn Ḥazm gives five counterarguments of his own, continuing the discussion into the following chapter which is devoted to "those who say that the world is eternal and that, nevertheless, it has an eternal Creator".⁴⁶

Al-Ghazzālī (d. 505AH / 1111AD) in *al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*⁴⁷ defines *dahriyyah* as a sect of the ancients, denying a Creator who governs the world and the existence of a future world, professing that the world has always been what it is, of itself, and that it will be so eternally. He likens them to the *zanādiqah*.⁴⁸ Belief in God is a serious matter that defines the very nature of humanity. Thus, al-Ghazzālī views atheists as being the lowest of the low, being veiled from God by 'pure darkness' due to their naturalist and/or egoistic worldview. One of the numerous objections al-Ghazzālī levelled against the philosophers in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* concerns the evidence and provability of

⁴⁶ Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fī al-Milāl wa al-Ahwā' al-Nihal* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Khaniji, n.d.), 16-17.

⁴⁷ Al-Ghazzālī had once classified the school of scholars through philosophical thought into three namely: Materialists (*al-dahriyyūn*), Naturalists (*al-ṭabī'īyyūn*), and Theists (*al-ilāhiyyūn*). He identifies *al-dahriyyun* as people who reject the existence of God as the world's creator and hold the view that the universe has existed spontaneously. *Al-ṭabī'īyyūn*, which is derived from the term *ṭabi'ī* and means "natural", refers to those who believe in nature. The Naturalists disseminates their findings on the natural world and animals. They suggest that humans and animals have comparable anatomies and temperaments. They draw the conclusion that human resurrection is impossible and reject all theories around it as a result. The Theists, on the other hand, are people who believe in God. Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato are among the academics al-Ghazzālī mentions. The Materialists and the Naturalists, are thus rejected by the Theists since they are regarded as heretics and nonbelievers, in both. See Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī, *al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl* (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2013), 61.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*.

God's existence, which is frequently addressed in secondary academic literature. The primary point of contention between philosophers and theologians, as al-Ghazzālī says, is whether the universe is eternal or began, with the latter group holding the well-known position that the world had a beginning.⁴⁹

Al-Ghazzālī wrote another work of *kalām*, *al-Iqtīṣād fī al-I'tiqād*, shortly after finishing the *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* in 1095.⁵⁰ He himself describes *al-Iqtīṣād fī al-I'tiqād* as an explanation of Muslim belief's essential concepts and their defence against heretical challenges. He presents the essential beliefs of Islam in remarkably similar words in his *al-Risālah al-Qudsiyyah*, another *kalām* treatise laying forth the core tenets of Islam. Erlwein argues that both books stand out instantly, not just in relation to earlier al-Ghazzālī's work, the *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, but also in comparison to the works of the *mutakallimūn*, who came before him. Al-Ghazzālī discusses the presence of the creator

⁴⁹ The book is divided into three main sections. The major section is divided into 20 discussions, constructed as literary conversations with the philosophers, following an introduction that consists of five prefaces, each of which is devoted to a certain aspect. Each debate focuses solely on the one aspect he chose to criticize. He disputes the philosophers on 16 metaphysical issues and 4 natural sciences issues. He only views the queries in these two fields as harmful. Al-Ghazzālī expresses his opinion that the two remaining branches of peripatetic philosophy, logic, and mathematics do not contain anything that is opposed to Islam in the third and fifth prefaces of his book. In the conclusion, he condemns three of the philosophers' key teaching as unbelief and the other 17 teachings discussed in the book are considered heretical innovations (*bid'ah*) that are considered false but nevertheless tolerated views.

⁵⁰ George F. Hourani, "A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104(2) (1984), 293; Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 35.

and the proof for it in both writings. This is not seen in other *mutakallim* writings prior to al-Ghazzālī.

Al-Māturīdī's *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* has had some scholarly attention in the past, and it has been stated that his theological reflection in this book is incomplete without confirmation of God's existence. In this book, he introduces argument from transition (*dalīl al-taghayyur*),⁵¹ argument from living and non-living things (*dalīl al-ashyā' al-ḥayāh wa ghayr al-ḥayāh*),⁵² argument from binary opposition (*dalīl al-aḥwāl al-mutadadah*),⁵³ argument from substances and accidents (*dalīl al-jawāhir wa al-a'rāḍ*),⁵⁴ argument from causality (*dalīl al-sababiyyah*),⁵⁵ argument from the end of the universe (*dalīl tanāhī al-'ālam*),⁵⁶ argument from movement (*dalīl al-ḥarakah*),⁵⁷ the existence of evil (*wujūd al-sharr*),⁵⁸ argument of providence (*dalīl al-ināyah*),⁵⁹ argument from the law of universe (*dalīl niẓām al-'ālam*),⁶⁰ and argument from creation (*dalīl al-ikhtirā'*)⁶¹. All these arguments are categorized under cosmological argument (*dalīl al-ḥuduth*) or *argument a novitate mundi*.⁶²

⁵¹ Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī, *al-Tawḥīd* (Beirut: al-Matba'ah al-Kathūlikiyyah, 1970), 12.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 13, 117.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 141, 142.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 12, 19.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 21, 122, 142.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶² A thorough explanation on al-Māturīdī's arguments can be referred to Bilqāsim al-Ghālī, *Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī: Ḥayātuh wa Ārā'uh al-'Aqdiyyah* (Tunisia: Dār al-Turkī li al-Nashr, 1989), 102-123.

Without any doubt, Ibn Sīnā is one of the most significant and influential philosophers in the classical Islamic tradition. According to Peter Adamson, the evidence of God's existence holds a particular position in Ibn Sīnā's philosophical thought: "[i]f one were asked to choose Avicenna's greatest contribution to the history of philosophy, one would legitimately choose his proof of God's existence."⁶³ His reference to God's existence is not intended to relate to the dichotomy between existence and non-existence as it is employed in cosmological, ontological, or teleological arguments for God's existence. He is not interested in demonstrating that reality consists of one more entity; rather, he is focused in determining which of the three types of existence that characterise the totality of creatures defines God. He mentions:

The natural science has a subject-matter [...] and that subject-matter is the body insofar as it is moving and resting [...]. As for the enquiry about whether the body is made up of atoms, whether it is finite or not, whether everybody has extension and form or not, this relates to the science that is after nature (*'ilm mā ba'd al-ṭabī'ah*) [i. e. metaphysics] for these are states of the body insofar as it is an existent, not insofar as it is subject to change, and this is the enquiry about the kind of its existence which is characteristic of it (*baḥṭh 'an naḥw wujūdih alladhī yakhaṣṣuh*), that is, [the question of] which existence is

⁶³ Peter Adamson, "From the Necessary Existent to God," in *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 170.

characteristic of it (*ayy wujūd yakhaṣṣuh*) [my emphasis].⁶⁴

He explains shortly after that:

The discussion of whether the body is made up of atoms is the discussion of the kind of its existence (*naḥw wujūdiḥ*), and so is the discussion of whether it is made up of matter and form. This is not related to physics. [...] Movement belongs to the accidents of the subject matter of physics, which is the body insofar as it is moving or resting, therefore, to establish these accidents has to take place in physics. But these do not belong to the parts of the body insofar as it is made up of form and matter, therefore establishing them belongs to metaphysics [my emphasis].⁶⁵

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī is regarded as one of a tremendous and extremely outstanding Muslim theologian. Al-Rāzī, like many theologians and philosophers before him, is said to have devoted a significant portion of his theological works to the subject of how the existence of God may be established. Ayman Shihadeh attributes four types of reasoning to al-Rāzī in order to show the existence of God; arguments from the creation of things [...]; arguments from the creation of things; arguments from the contingency of things; and arguments from the contingency of things.⁶⁶ In his *al-Arbaʿīn fī Uṣūl al-*

⁶⁴ Abū 'Alī Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ta'liqāt* (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmma li al-Kitāb, 1973), 171–172.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁶⁶ Ayman Shihadeh, "The Existence of God," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. T. Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 198. Compare also Yasin Ceylan, *Theology and Tafṣīr in the Major Works of*

Dīn, for instance, al-Rāzī follows the section on the affirmation of the originatedness of the world with a section entitled "On establishing knowledge of the creator." He introduces the four approaches discussed previously; the possibility of essences (*imkān al-dhawāt*) of the things making up this world, the possibility of their attributes (*imkān al-ṣifāt*), the originatedness of substances and bodies (*ḥudūth al-jawāhir wa al-ajsām*) and their attributes (*ḥudūth al-ṣifāt*).⁶⁷

Al-Shahrastānī (d. 548AH /1153AD) noted that the (Nizārī) Ismā'īlites in Khurasan were called *Ta'īmīyyah* or *Mulḥidah*.⁶⁸ From the second half of the 6th AH /12th AD century, the plural *malāḥidah* (*mulāḥidah* in Persian usage) was regularly applied to the Nizārī Ismā'īlites everywhere, including Syria. In the early 'Abbasid age, the Muslim theologians began to use the term *mulḥid* in the meaning of "heretic, deviator in religious beliefs". *Ilḥād* came to signify not so much mere adherence to false religious doctrine as rejection of religion as such, materialist scepticism and atheism. In Ottoman usage, *mulḥid* and *ilḥād* were terms commonly employed to describe subversive doctrines among the Shī'ah and Sufis.⁶⁹

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1996), 81–85, who makes the same observation.

⁶⁷ Al-Rāzī, *al-Arba'īn fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Kullīyyāt al-Azhariyyah, 1986), 1: 103, 121, 124, and 129. The first two methods result in the affirmation of "the existence of the necessarily existent" (*wujūd wājib al-wujūd*) and "the necessarily existent due to essence" (*ithbāt wājib al-wujūd li-dhātihī*) respectively. The latter methods result in the affirmation of "the knowledge of the creator" (*al-'ilm bi al-ṣāni'*).

⁶⁸ 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* (Cairo: Muassasah al-Halabi, 2009), 1: 192.

⁶⁹ Repp. R.C., "Mulḥid", 7: 546.

Ibn Rushd (d. 590AH /1198AD), one of the greatest Muslim philosophers in *al-Kashf 'an Manāhij al-Adillah fī 'Aqā'id al-Millah* begin his remarks about God with the affirmation of the creator.⁷⁰ He writes:

I will begin by explaining what the lawgiver (*al-shāri'*) intended the masses to believe regarding God (Most-High!), and [by explaining] the methods which he laid down for them in the honourable book [i. e. the Qur'an]. We will begin with the knowledge of the method by which the existence of the creator (*wujūd al-ṣāni'*) is known, for this is the first item of knowledge which humans (*al-mukallaf*) have to know.⁷¹

Ibn Rushd identifies two techniques, which he refers to as the argument from providence (*dalīl al-ināyah*) and the argument from creation (*dalīl al-al-ikhtirā'*) and argues to be the arguments preferred by the Qur'an itself.⁷²

b. Atheism and New Atheism in Modern Islam

Along the modern history until 19th century, there was only little information regarding atheism in Muslim world. This situation is believed to happen because of atheism is still a relatively unacceptable and taboo subject on that time. Apart from that, the hidden wave

⁷⁰ In his introduction to Ibrahim Y. Najjar's translation of the *Kashf*, Majid Fakhry writes: "[the *Kashf*] opens with a chapter on the demonstration of God's existence." Refer to *Muhammad b. Ahmad Ibn Rushd, Faith and Reason in Islam: Averroes' Exposition of Religious Arguments (Al-Kashf 'an Manāhij al-Adillah fī 'Aqā'id al-Millah)*, trans. with footnotes, index, and bibliography by Ibrahim Y. Najjar (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), 4.

⁷¹ Ibn Rushd, *al-Kashf 'an Manāhij al-Adillah fī 'Aqā'id al-Millah* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1998), 101.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 118.

of atheism in Muslim countries especially Egypt on the time of Gamal Abdel Nasser was undeniable.⁷³ Nevertheless, there were some prominent figures of Muslim world that were associated to atheism before the emergence of New Atheism. The most controversial figures are Ismā'īl Aḥmad Adham and 'Abd Allāh al-Qāsimī.

Ismā'īl Aḥmad Adham was one of the most notorious Egyptian atheists of the 1930s to openly declare his atheism, which he attempted to promote through his disreputable book; *Li Mādhā Anā Muḥīd?* The essay provoked heated responses from theist writers of the period, putting Adham in the limelight.⁷⁴ His book has been refuted by Aḥmad Abū Shādī and Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī through their books; *Li Mādhā Anā Mu'min?* and *Li Mādhā Huwa Muḥīd?*⁷⁵ However, the strongest refutation was made by the last Shaykh al-Islām of the Ottoman Empire, Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī in his four-volume *magnum opus*, *Mawqif al-'Aql wa al-'Ilm wa al-'Ālam min Rabb al-'Ālamīn wa 'Ibādih al-Mursalīn*.⁷⁶

In *Min Tārīkh al-Ilḥād fī al-Islām*,⁷⁷ 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī has attempted to gather the stories and thoughts of atheists in Islamic history from different

⁷³ Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, "The Origins of Socialist Thought in Egypt, 1882–1922" (Doctor of Philosophy thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1972), 169.

⁷⁴ G.H.A. Juynboll, "Ismail Ahmad Adham (1911–1940), the Atheist," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 3 (1972), 54–71.

⁷⁵ These criticism by Aḥmad Abū Shādī and Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī has been brilliantly scrutinized by Sulayman bin Ṣāliḥ al-Khurāshī in his book entitled *Intihār Ismā'īl Adham*.

⁷⁶ Ismā'īl al-Miṣrī, "Al-Ilḥād wa al-Muḥīdūn fī Miṣr (1): Al-Judhūr wa al-Taḥawwulāt", al-Ma'had al-Miṣrī li al-Dirāsāt, retrieved on 20 November 2020, <https://eipss-eg.org/الإحاد-والملحدون-في-مصر-1-الجذور-والتحويلات>

⁷⁷ 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Mu'allafat al-Ghazālī* (Kuwait: Wakālah al-Matbū'ah, 1977).

sources. Concerned neither with defending nor attacking these thinkers, the book attempts instead to document their existence as agents within this rich civilization. Badawī postulates that Arab atheists sought to question and discredit the idea of prophethood, on the basis that religiosity in the East is primarily built on this principle.

*Atheism and Islam: A Contemporary Discourse*⁷⁸ offers a much-needed, comprehensive, and thematic overview of the atheist-theist discourse from several scientific and philosophical-theological perspectives. Shoaib Malik covers the rhetoric of Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Richard Dawkins, and Ali Rizvi, and expresses scientific and philosophical contentions based upon those arguments. The monograph provides a critique of the ubiquitous over-reliance on natural theology, which has not resolved the "theological gap", as opposed to the extra-evaluative potential of systematic (revealed) theology. From evolution to sociology, physics to metaphysics, philosophy to theology, this monograph provides an important overview of the current state of the discourse. Nevertheless, Shoaib only focuses on explaining these issues briefly and not an in-depth analysis.

Hamza Andreas Tzortzis completed the loophole in Shoaib's monograph above (*Atheism and Islam*) in his book *The Divine Reality: God, Islam, and the Mirage of Atheism*.⁷⁹ It provides a compelling case for the rational and spiritual foundations of Islam, whilst intelligently and compassionately deconstructing atheism. This book gives an existential, spiritual, and

⁷⁸ Shoaib Ahmed Malik, *Atheism and Islam: A Contemporary Discourse* (Abu Dhabi: Kalam Research & Media, 2018).

⁷⁹ Hamza Andreas Tzortzis, *The Divine Reality: God, Islam, and the Mirage of Atheism* (n.p.: Lion Rock Publishing, 2019).

rational journey that articulates powerful arguments for the existence of God, the Qur'an, the Prophethood of Muḥammad and why we must know, love and worship God. He addresses academic and popular arguments, ideas and refutations of the classical Muslim theologian on atheism while showing how contemporary atheism is based on false assumptions about reality, which leads to incoherent answers to life's important questions.

ʿAmrū Sharīf comes with the same concept through his books *Khurāfat al-Ilhād*⁸⁰ and *Wahm al-Ilhād*⁸¹ yet its explanations are useful in helping to address the issue critically and academically rather than Tzortis that seems to simplify his writing in layman's terms. Other than that, ʿAbd Allāh bin Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUjayrī also came with a substantial and informative new work on New Atheism in his book, *Mīlīshiyā al-Ilhād*.⁸² He elucidates lots of information regarding New Atheism such as their writings, centres, webs as well as some issues like free will, morality, and freedom in Islam.

Suʿūd ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-ʿArīfī in *al-Adillah al-ʿAqliyyah al-Qurʿāniyyah ʿalā Uṣūl al-Iʿtiqād*⁸³ draws on an extensive range of sources to the Qur'anic deductive reasoning in Islamic theology such as teleological argument (*dilālah al-khalq wa al-ikhtirā*), argument from providence (*dilālah al-ʿināyah*), argument from adeptness and management (*dilālah al-itqān wa al-tadbīr*), argument from subjugation and

⁸⁰ ʿAmrū Sharīf, *Khurāfat al-Ilhād* (Cairo: Maktabah Shurūq al-Duwaliyyah, 2014).

⁸¹ ʿAmrū Sharīf, *Wahm al-Ilhād* (Cairo: Dār al-Azhar, 2013).

⁸² ʿAbd Allāh bin Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUjayrī, *Mīlīshiyā al-Ilhād* (London: Takween Center, 2020).

⁸³ Suʿūd ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-ʿArīfī, *al-Adillah al-ʿAqliyyah al-Qurʿāniyyah ʿalā Uṣūl al-Iʿtiqād* (London: Takween Centre, 2017).

management (*dilālah al-taskhīr wa al-tadbīr*), and argument from specialism (*dilālah al-takhsīṣ*). He argues that the revelation itself consist of rational arguments on the existence of God, His Attributes, and arguments on prophethood. While Afnān Ḥamad Muḥammad al-Ghamās, who is al-‘Arīfī’s academic supervisee offers a brief study of the same topic in her book, *Manhaj al-Qur’ān al-Karīm fī Daḥd Shubuḥat al-Mulḥidīn*⁸⁴, there is not so much difference in both works except al-‘Arīfī’s study was done thoroughly on the theme. *Manhaj al-Qur’ān*, although preliminary, provides important pointers and direction toward further investigation such as this present study.

Another important works on atheism is written by Sāmī ‘Āmirī entitled *Barāhīn Wujūd Allāh fī al-Nafs wa al-‘Aql wa al-‘Ilm*⁸⁵ and Sulṭān bin ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-‘Umayrī entitled *Zāhirah Naqd al-Dīn fī al-Fikr al-Gharbī al-Ḥadīth (2)*.⁸⁶ Both provide a comprehensive and profound discussion on the existence of God and disagreement to the viewpoint of atheism. Al-‘Umayrī’s approaches can be seen in the first chapter when he brilliantly perusing the main issue which is the problem of religious criticism in the West, the issue of empiricism as well as the flaws of the thought of Immanuel Kant, Henri Bergson, and Blaise Pascal.

On the issue of the existence of God, he presents three arguments namely teleological argument (*dalīl al-khalq wa al-ījād*), argument from refinement and

⁸⁴ Afnān Ḥamad, al-Ghamās, *Manhaj al-Qur’ān al-Karīm fī Daḥd Shubuḥat al-Mulḥidīn* (Riyadh: Dalā’il Centre, 2017).

⁸⁵ Sāmī ‘Āmirī, *Barāhīn Wujūd Allāh fī al-Nafs wa al-‘Aql wa al-‘Ilm*, (London: Takween Studies and Research, 2018).

⁸⁶ Sulṭān bin ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-‘Umayrī, *Zāhirah Naqd al-Dīn fī al-Fikr al-Gharbī al-Ḥadīth (2)* (London: Takween Studies and Research, 2018).

adeptness (*dalīl al-iḥkām wa al-itqān*) and the argument from principles and values (*dalīl al-mabādi' wa al-qayyim*) which has been clearly elaborated with answers for misconceptions around each argument. Sāmī 'Āmirī has also contributed vastly to the intellectual discussions on atheism and Islām through his work *Fa Man Khalaq Allāh*.⁸⁷ His critiques on the framework of atheism are based on three main points; natural instinct (*fiṭrah*), ontological proof and cosmological argument. His later work, *Mushkilah al-Sharr wa Wujūd Allāh*⁸⁸ completes the gap by offering a candid yet informed discussion on the nature of problem of evil and its discourse, and a brief history a development of theodicy.

However, one of the comprehensive modern books on refuting the idea of atheism on the existence of God is written by Sa'īd Fūdah entitled *al-Adillah al-'Aqliyyah 'alā Wujud Allāh bayn al-Mutakallimīn wa al-Falāsifah*.⁸⁹ Along with another book *al-Dalīl al-Kawnī 'alā Wujud Allāh*,⁹⁰ Sa'īd Fūdah presents a thorough explanation, views, similarity, differences, and critiques on several arguments by Muslim and Western theologian and philosophers. He also offers some improvement to strengthen the approved arguments made by those scholars.

In relation to the Muslims in Malaysia (or Malaya before), the issue of atheism and apostasy are regarded as a taboo as well as a politically explosive proposition. However, there was an interesting brief

⁸⁷ Sāmī 'Āmirī, *Fa Man Khalaqa Allāh?* (London: Takween Studies and Research, 2018).

⁸⁸ Sāmī 'Āmirī, *Mushkilah al-Sharr wa Wujūd Allāh* (London: Takween Studies and Research, 2016).

⁸⁹ Sa'īd Fūdah, *al-Adillah al-'Aqliyyah 'alā Wujud Allāh bayn al-Mutakallimīn wa al-Falāsifah* (n.p.: Dār al-Aṣṣayn, 2016).

⁹⁰ Sa'īd Fūdah, *al-Dalīl al-Kawnī 'alā Wujud Allāh* (n.p.: Dār al-Aṣṣayn, 2016).

dialogue on the existence of God by Burhanuddin al-Helmy and Mokhtaruddin Lasso as mentioned by Ahmad Boestaman in his book, *Dr. Burhanuddin: Putera Setia Melayu Raya*. Burhanuddin had given excellent arguments by utilizing dialectical methodology and the dialogue end up when Mokhtaruddin Lasso raised up both of his hands and said: "*Cukuplah sekadar itu sahaja tuan Doktor dan kita kira seri – tak kalah tak menang*" (I think that's enough, Doc. It is draw - no win or loss.)⁹¹

Conclusion

This study begins with a fundamental analysis of the notion of Atheism and New Atheism from Islamic and Western perspective. From there, it is shown that the difference between earlier definition of Atheism in Islamic world and later, influence the broadness of the meaning. The modern Muslim scholars' definition on Atheism seems to become narrower and fit with the modern worldwide understanding of the definition of Atheism although academics have not reached a consensus on it. Besides, the classical and modern Muslim scholars have done an extensive effort in response toward Atheism and New Atheism especially on the most important notion on the existence of Allah. Those approaches can be summarised into four main arguments: namely ontological argument, argument from contingency, *kalām* cosmological argument, teleological argument, and moral argument.

However, looking through the numerous books on promoting Atheism nowadays, contents on social medias, and comprehensive media coverage on them, there is a dire need for modern Muslim scholars to come out with constructive, systemic, and systematic

⁹¹ Ahmad Boestaman, *Dr. Burhanuddin: Putera Setia Melayu Raya*, (Petaling Jaya: Gerak Budaya, 2019).

approaches in dealing with New Atheism. The awareness among the young Muslim generation on New Atheism must be instilled as results on the field-based study on 7,584 students at the University of Amman, Jordan represents the urge to improve the understanding on New Atheism.⁹² The researcher believes that the religious sciences, studies, knowledge, or disciplines that Muslim scholars founded and developed on the basis of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah must also undergo reform (*islāh*), renewal (*tajdīd*), and constant improvement in areas or matters that are subject to change over time (*mutaghayyirāt*).

One of the approaches is the integration of knowledge. As emphasized by Rushdan, it does not imply simply incorporating the concept of religious revelation knowledge into the discussion of human rationale knowledge. The concept and application of knowledge integration must be structured and intertwined systematically at the ontological, epistemological, and axiological levels, such as by considering the appropriateness of the context of the discussion of knowledge from the perspective of revelation (*wahy*).⁹³ Practically, the four main arguments above need to be consolidated with current scientific findings as well as being succinct to make it easier to comprehend by all modern society regardless of age and background.

⁹² Friawan, M. S., Abd. Latif, F., & Saged, A. A. G., "Causes of the New Atheism: A Study on its Understanding Among Universities Students in Amman, Jordan," *Afkar: Journal of Aqidah & Islamic Thought Special Issue 2* (2020), 185–222. <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.sp2020no2.7>

⁹³ Mohd Rushdan, M. J., "Kerangka Konsep Integrasi Ilmu Naqli dan Aqli (INAQ) di Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia," *Abqari Journal* 20(1) (2019), 21-32.

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